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MONTHLY REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

TEAMSTER REFORM MOVEMENT SURVIVES CAREY'S DEBACLE

JANE SLAUGHTER

VOL. 49
11

A DEBATE ON ECOLOGY

JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER and DAVID HARVEY

NORTH KOREA DIARY

HUGH DEANE

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ALSO INSIDE:

James D. Cockcroft reviews *Che Guevara and the FBI*, edited by Michael Ratner and Michael Steven Smith; and the vol. 49 Index

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Readers may remember that in last year's summer issue on labor we talked about a roundtable organized by *MR* for activists in the labor movement and held in our office in New York last March. The idea was to provide a forum for labor activists to establish connections among themselves and to discuss issues of common interest at a particularly important historical moment, at a time when the labor movement in various parts of the world, including the United States, is beginning to show signs of renewal. We also hoped to revive the long dormant connection between the socialist left and the labor movement, and we

(Continued on inside back cover)

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TEAMSTER REFORM MOVEMENT SURVIVES CAREY'S DEBACLE

by JANE SLAUGHTER

What's remarkable about the aftermath of Ron Carey's removal as a candidate for Teamsters president is the staying power of the reform movement. Most predicted the union would quickly fall back into the hands of the mobbed-up Old Guard, personified by James Hoffa, Jr. But in recent local elections rank and file members have chosen to carry on with the business of reform, without the man who once symbolized those changes in the Teamsters.

In November, 10 thousand workers at Northwest Airlines voted 3-1 against the pro-Hoffa incumbents and for the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) slate. In Dallas and Columbus, Ohio local races, reformers became president and Hoffa's guys finished third. In December, members in 18,000-member Chicago Local 705 rejected Hoffa's spokesman in his bid for the local presidency, and re-elected the incumbent reformer, Jerry Zero. Even in Hoffa Sr.'s home Local 299 in Detroit, where Hoffa Junior campaigned personally for his buddies, members voted for the Carey loyalists.

The will to continue the battle was manifest at TDU's annual convention—the largest ever—held in November just four days after Carey's disqualification. Although shocked and hurt, and maintaining strong feeling for

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Carey, member after member rose to remind each other, "It was never about one man."

Members rejected the notion, raised by a few, that TDU's priority should be to rally around Carey's appeal of the charges against him. Instead they vowed to continue their work: organizing for the Master Freight contract, winning local elections, finding a new reform candidate for president. The 600 people present pledged $65,000.

TDU could survive Carey's downfall because the movement had never put all its eggs in the presidential basket. Unlike the Miners for Democracy in the 1970s, who faded away after the insurgents elected Arnold Miller to head the United Mine Workers, TDU kept its organization alive and active after Carey took office, pushing here and prodding there. TDU maintained its own network, getting information out sometimes in advance of the International. The union's mobilization plan for UPS was adopted from TDU's earlier contract campaigns. It was TDU that pushed the line "ready to strike" early on at UPS, when Carey was silent.

The relationship was a coalition between parties that didn't agree on all points. Carey certainly maintained his independence as well. He never joined TDU, because he just didn't get its notion of bottom-up control. His use of the November Group consultants in his 1996 re-election campaign was no anomaly; throughout his term he had turned sometimes to TDUers, sometimes to Old Guard types, sometimes to middle-of-the-road unionists, and sometimes to consultants without a drop of unionism in their blood.

The consultants' inside-the-Beltway-type functioning was the opposite of TDU's rank-and-file approach. Their arrogance led to the scheme to use members' dues money for the Carey campaign's expensive mailings, and to thinking that they could get away with it even though the union was under government supervision.

Government Intervention

There's been a lot of talk on the left, in the wake of Carey's disqualification, about the evils of "government inter-

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vention" in the union. But let's look at what that government intervention consisted of. In the late 1980s the President's Commission on Organized Crime held hearings about Mob involvement in the Teamsters. The Justice Department was threatening to use the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act to put the union in trusteeship. TDU "intervened" to argue that the best way to begin cleaning up the union was not trusteeship—government control—but to give members the right to vote for their top officers (a right, then and now, enjoyed by only a minority of U.S. union members). This proposal quickly gained the moral high ground. A majority of Congresspeople, the influential newspapers, and the AFL-CIO all pressured the Justice Department not to trustee the International. Some of these (though not the AFL-CIO) strongly advocated TDU's plan. The Justice Department gave in, and got Teamster officials to sign a consent decree.

Thus "government intervention" meant that union officers were pressured to agree to a democratic constitutional change that reformers had championed in the Teamsters, and other unions, for years (plus official oversight to make sure that that election, and the next one, were not stolen). Without one-member-one-vote elections, the Old Guard would still be running the Teamsters; mobsters would not have been cleaned out of seventy locals; no volunteer organize-the-unorganized campaign would have been set up; no caravans would have gone from city to city to protest NAFTA; there would have been no strike at UPS.

Democratic elections for the top jobs didn't solve all the Teamsters' problems; one member said, "We've landed a helicopter on the mountaintop, but the enemy still controls the rest of the mountain." But the elections did set in motion, unevenly, to be sure, a momentum of member involvement and union activism that will be hard to reverse. "They can't put the genie back in the bottle," said Teamsters Vice-president and TDU Co-chair Diana Kilmury.

It's likewise tempting, but likewise ahistorical, to believe that Carey's disqualification was retaliation for the UPS strike.

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Certainly Rep. Peter Hoekstra's circus-like hearings on the Teamsters are a direct result of his business backers' dismay at the strike and the public support it received. But, as explained above, the government gained the right to monitor elections back in 1989, when the union's leaders had long been lapdogs for the employers, not militants. The investigation of election finances began in early 1997, long before the August battle at UPS. The illegalities were uncovered because they were there to be found—and they were none too subtle.

TDU Organizer Ken Paff told the group's November convention, "Bringing consultants whose specialty is razzle-dazzle and political connections into the Carey campaign was a monumental blunder. It was the opposite of rank and file power. It was the opposite of a grassroots campaign ... it was about finding some kind of shortcut.... If you are going to take on corporate America, if you are going to win major strikes, if you are going to start turning the labor movement around, you had better make sure you are not vulnerable."

Carey's campaign made itself vulnerable when it chose the dirty-money shortcut over crusading at the barns with the rank and file. Carey's disgrace is a tragedy, the fall of a good but flawed man. His mistake, the mistake that brought him down, was not to put his faith in the rank and file.

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THE SCALE OF OUR ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

by JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER

One of the problems that has most troubled analysts of global ecological crisis is the question of scale. How momentous is the ecological crisis? Is the survival of the human species in question? What about life in general? Are the basic biogeochemical cycles of the planet vulnerable? Although few now deny that there is such a thing as an environmental crisis, or that it is in some sense global in character, some rational scientists insist that it is wrong to say that life itself, much less the planet, is seriously threatened. Even the mass extinction of species, it is pointed out, has previously occurred in evolutionary history. Critics of environmentalism (often themselves claiming to be environmentalists) have frequently used these rational reservations on the part of scientists to brand the environmental movement as "apocalyptic."

Lest one conclude that this is simply a political dispute between those on the side of nature and the greater part of humanity, on the one hand, and those who support the ecologically destructive status quo, on the other, it should be emphasized that the same question has been often raised within the left itself—and sometimes by individuals deeply

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concerned about environmental problems. An example of this is David Harvey's new book, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (1996). Harvey devotes considerable space in this work to criticizing my book, *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment* (Monthly Review Press, 1994), for the "apocalyptic" character of its argument. In Harvey's words,

> [T]he postulation of a planetary ecological crisis, the very idea that the planet is somehow 'vulnerable' to human action or that we can actually destroy the earth, repeats in negative form the hubristic claims of those who aspire to planetary domination. The subtext is that the earth is somehow fragile and that we need to become caring managers or caring physicians to nurse it back from sickness into health.... Against this it is crucial to understand that it is materially impossible for us to destroy the planet earth, that the worst we can do is to engage in material transformations of our environment so as to make life less rather than more comfortable for our own species being, while recognizing that what we do also does have ramifications (both positive and negative) for other living species....Politically, the millenarian and apocalyptic proclamation that ecocide is imminent has had a dubious history. It is not a good basis for left politics and it is very vulnerable to the arguments long advanced by [Julian] Simon and now by [Greg] Easterbrook, that conditions of life (as measured, for example, by life expectancy) are better now than they have ever been and that the doomsday scenario of the environmentalists is far-fetched and improbable.[1]

Aside from the purely rhetorical flourishes—the use of such terms as "millenarian" and "apocalyptic" which because of the sense of religious fatalism associated with them imply something irrational in character (the wrath of God, the second coming) which has little to do with the arguments of most environmentalists—this can be taken as a serious criticism not only of *The Vulnerable Planet* but of ideas that have common currency in environmental circles. It is noteworthy that this same criticism, of being "apocalyptic," has frequently been leveled at such figures as Henry David Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, Rachel Carson, Paul Ehrlich and Barry Commoner—indeed at almost all figures who have contributed

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anything of importance to understanding the modern ecological crisis.[2]

Naturally, some phrases utilized in the environmental discussion—such as *Silent Spring*, *The Closing Circle*, *Earth in the Balance*, *The End of Nature*, and *The Vulnerable Planet*—are metaphorical, and while pointing to real concerns are not to be taken too literally. When it comes to actual argument, though, most analysts attempt to present an accurate portrayal of the real dimensions of the problem. Thus the opening sentences of Chapter One of *The Vulnerable Planet* convey the exact sense in which the title of that work is to be understood: "Human society has reached a critical threshold in its relation to the environment. The destruction of the planet, in the sense of making it unusable for human purposes, has grown to such an extent that it now threatens the continuation of much of nature, as well as the survival and development of society itself." It might have been added that the survival of the human species was also in doubt as a result of these very same processes.

Geological Time and Human Time

All of this drives us back to our initial question: what is the proper scale with which to view our environmental crisis? This is an issue that was taken up not too long ago by Stephen Jay Gould in an essay entitled "The Golden Rule: A Proper Scale for Our Environmental Crisis." Gould begins his article by acknowledging the reality of some of the very facts cited by those who downplay the environmental crisis. Human beings he argues are powerless over the earth on a geological time scale (that is in terms of tens of millions of years):

> All the megatonnage in all our nuclear arsenals yields but one ten-thousandth the power of the 10 km asteroid that might have triggered the Cretaceous mass extinction. Yet the earth survived that larger shock and, in wiping out dinosaurs, paved a road for the evolution of large mammals, including humans. We fear global warming, yet even the most radical model yields an earth far cooler than many happy and prosperous times of a prehuman past. We can surely destroy ourselves, and take many other species with us, but

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we can barely dent bacterial diversity and will surely not remove many million species of insects and mites. On geological scales, our planet will take good care of itself and let time clear the impact of any human malfeasance.

Having said this, however, Gould goes on to suggest that this way of thinking—predicated on a geological time-scale—is irrelevant where human time-scales are concerned. "We cannot threaten at geological scales," Gould writes,

but such vastness has no impact upon us. We have a legitimately parochial interest in our own lives, the happiness and prosperity of our children, the suffering of our fellows. The planet will recover from a nuclear holocaust, but we will be killed and maimed by billions, and our culture will perish. The earth will prosper if polar icecaps melt under a global greenhouse, but most of our major cities, built at sea level as ports and harbors, will founder, and changing agricultural patterns will uproot our populations.[3]

Our vision in contemporary society is normally limited to our own lifetime and that of a few generations that come before or after us. As a teacher in the realm of social science I know how difficult it is to get students to think in terms of historical time, which often means perceiving things on a scale of centuries or millennia. All of this, however, falls far short of a geological time scale, which exceeds the average life span of most species. In this sense it is reasonable to speak metaphorically of a world in which there is no more spring, or of a "vulnerable planet" when as Gould says the threatened reality is one of the elimination of human society and even the human species, along with innumerable, "higher" species of direct significance to human beings, as a result of the destruction that humanity is wreaking on its own life support systems. We are definitely speaking parochially: of "our ecological crisis" and not of the demise of the earth or of the biosphere on a geological time-scale. Yet behind this concern lies the fact that even the basic biogeochemical processes of the planet—which human beings have come to see as quite fixed—are "vulnerable" to human transformation in ways that are likely to destroy the planet as a place for human habitation.

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None of this of course is meant to deny the reality that, as Gould says, we can "barely dent bacterial diversity and will surely not remove many million of species of insects and mites." But to say that we cannot claim that the planet or the biosphere is "vulnerable" because such "lower" life forms will survive, or because the biosphere will recover over tens of millions of years is to deny the right of human beings to identify their fate and that of the species with which they are most closely connected with the fate of the planet. It is to insist on a geological way of thinking (the peculiar professional reality of geologists and paleontologists), which though of great scientific importance has little direct relevance for humanity's own existence. It is as if one were to take the deep ecological viewpoint, which insists that we should view human beings as no more important—even in our own eyes—than any other species, to the level of absolute absurdity of denying that it matters whether we as a species utterly destroy our own moment on earth. It is to deny an essential anthropocentrism without which it is probably impossible for human beings to respond to the ecological crisis on the scale at which we must—that is in the largest human terms, which identifies our fate with that of the planet.

Comfort or Survival?

Harvey does not stop with a mere rejection of unreasoning "apocalypticism" but goes on to insist that the environmental crisis raises no more serious issue for human beings directly than our own comfort. "The worst" that we can do as a result of our environmental depredations, he says, is "to make life less rather than more comfortable." To point to anything beyond this, we are told, opens one up to the criticisms of those like Julian Simon and Greg Easterbrook who accuse most environmentalists of being "doomsday prophets."

To be sure, one should beware of any gross exaggeration of environmental problems. But those sympathetic to the environment should not be lulled by the likes of Simon and Easterbrook—whom Paul and Anne Ehrlich in their *Betrayal*

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of Science and Reason have dismissed as representatives of the current "brownlash" against environmentalism—into playing down the severity of the ecological crisis.[4] It has been the world's natural and physical scientists and not doomsday prophets or the scientifically uninformed who have been at the forefront in sounding the alarm with regard to global ecological crisis. This can be seen by looking at the "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity" initiated by the Union of Concerned Scientists and signed in 1992 by 1,575 of the world's most distinguished scientists, including more than half of all living scientists awarded the Nobel prize. According to this carefully worded statement, representing the consensus of concerned scientists:

> Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at risk the future we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdom, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring.[5]

The World Scientists go on to emphasize that, "The environment is suffering critical stress" in such areas as the atmosphere, the oceans, water resources, soil, forests, and living species. "The irreversible loss of species, which by 2100 may reach one-third of all species now living is especially serious." Their conclusion is unmistakably clear: "We the undersigned, senior members of the world's scientific community, hereby warn all humanity of what lies ahead. A great change in our stewardship of the Earth and the life on it is required if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated."

The main reason that the ecology of the entire planet—as we know it—is now threatened with "irretrievable mutilation" has to do with the rapidly rising rate at which human beings are transforming the earth, on a scale that is now truly planetary in character, rivaling the basic biogeochemical processes of the planet. A few facts are worth noting. Somewhere

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between a third and a half of the land surface of the earth has been transformed by human action; the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere has increased by some 30 percent since the Industrial Revolution; humanity now fixes more atmospheric nitrogen than all natural terrestrial sources combined; more than half of the fresh water sources are now put to use by human beings; 22 percent of marine fisheries are being overexploited (or have already been depleted), while 44 percent are at their limit of exploitation; one-quarter of the Earth's bird species have been driven into extinction by human activities; rates of species extinction are now 100 to 1000 times those that existed prior to the human domination of the earth. In the words of a distinguished team of scientists writing in *Science* magazine: "The rates, scales, kinds, and combinations of changes occurring now are fundamentally different from those at any other time in history; we are changing the Earth more rapidly than we are understanding it."[6]

The Unsustainable Development of Capitalism

Yet, the world's natural and physical scientists, who have done so much to alert us to the dangers facing humanity and the planet as we know it are ill-equipped to understand the roots of the problem (or even the enormity of the threat looming before us), since they are generally unable to account for the social problems that underlie this ecological crisis, which demand explanations that go beyond such factors as biology, demography and technology—to address historical forms of production, and particularly capitalism.

Most scientific statements on the environmental crisis end with calls for more careful management. Often, as in the World Scientists' Warning, specific measures are proposed such as reduced dependence on fossil fuels and the substitution of solar energy; cutbacks in consumption; the elimination of world poverty; controls on world population growth; and increased sexual equality for women, including the right to make their own reproductive decisions.

Within the mainstream scientific viewpoint these issues are reduced to questions of individual and collective will—

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and sometimes to rational choice by means of the market. Since little serious thought is given to the social problem and its relation to ecological sustainability, the views of mainstream environmentalists including most concerned scientists, as Hans Magnus Enzensberger once pointed out, often smack of a preacher's sermon in which "the horror of the predicted catastrophe contrasts sharply with the mildness of the admonition with which we are allowed to escape."[7]

It is only when knowledge of ecological trends is coupled with an understanding of capital accumulation that the full extent of our global ecological crisis is apparent. Capitalism, as many of the world's greatest economists—both mainstream and radical—have long acknowledged, is a system that can never stand still. If the investment frontier does not expand, and if profits do not increase, the circulation of capital will be interrupted and a crisis will ensue. A "stationary" capitalism is thus an impossibility. As Schumpeter expressed it, "capitalism is a process, stationary capitalism would be a *contradictio in adjecto.*" But at the dawn of the twenty-first century there is every reason to believe that the kind of rapid economic growth that the system demands in order to sustain its very existence—growth that now occurs within an orbit that encompasses the entire planet—is no longer ecologically sustainable, since it is biased toward high throughputs of materials and energy, which put strains on both the planetary taps (resources) and sinks (the ecosystems that must absorb the resulting waste). All of this is made much worse by the social, economic and ecological waste resulting from the specific nature and form of capitalist production (going beyond the question of mere quantitative growth).[8]

The fact that there are limitations to the sustainable human intervention into nature—which is a way of saying that human society necessarily coevolves with nature and is not really independent of it—does not mean that all hope of unending human progress should be abandoned or that there cannot be a continuing development of wealth, in the sense of the more complete satisfaction of genuine human needs. But it does mean that the human capacity to promote narrow

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instrumental gain by means of the "invisible hand" of the market for the benefit of a very few in accordance with the principle "après moi, le déluge!" inevitably comes up against certain general barriers imposed by nature, as well as more specific social and historical barriers.[9]

The Necessity of Social Control

In 1946 George Orwell wrote an essay entitled "Some Thoughts on the Common Toad." In that essay he begins by observing tadpoles in a pool, which leads to the argument that spring, like nature in general, is ever resurgent; no matter how oppressive the society nature is ever a haven and a source of "surplus energy." "So long as you are not actually ill, hungry, frightened or immured in a prison or a holiday camp, spring is still spring. The atom bombs are piling up in the factories, the police are prowling through the cities, the lies are streaming from the loudspeakers, but the earth is still going around the sun, and neither the dictators nor the bureaucrats, deeply as they disapprove of the process, are able to prevent it." The mere resurgence every year of the spring, Orwell suggested, was a reality that had nothing whatever to do with the fact that "we are all groaning, or at any rate ought to be groaning, under the shackles of the capitalist system" and in that sense it completely lacked "a class angle." Yet, "if a man cannot enjoy the return of the spring," Orwell asked, "why should he be happy in a labour-saving Utopia?"[10]

Today, a half-century later, Orwell's belief that nature was somehow isolated from the social crisis of capitalism appears almost quaint. About a decade and a half after he authored his essay Rachel Carson wrote her environmental classic, *Silent Spring* which argued that,

> Along with the possibility of the extinction of mankind by nuclear war, the central problem of our age has ... become the contamination of man's total environment with such substances of incredible potential for harm—substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals and even penetrate the germ cells to shatter or alter the very material of heredity upon which the shape of the future depends.[11]

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The source of this tragedy for Carson was that we live in "an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged."[12] The symbolic representation of this crisis was for her a spring suddenly devoid of songbirds.

Ironically, given Orwell's earlier argument, one of the leading symbols of the "silencing of the spring" today is vanishing frogs and toads. There are some 3,960 species of frogs and toads, the noisiest amphibians. (Herpetologists often refer to both as frogs.) Frogs first emerged 150 to 200 million years ago. Now the growing silence of the spring is deepened by the rapid disappearance of frog species all over the globe—often in areas remote from human contact. In 1990 the world's herpetologists sounded the alarm, making "the vanishing frogs" one of the most widely heralded global ecological catastrophes of the decade. By 1994 a probable cause had been ascertained as a result of a series of experiments conducted in Oregon. UV-B, exposure to which is increasing due to the thinning of the ozone layer, was discovered to be killing frog eggs exposed to sunlight. Widely publicized, this phenomenon has become the proverbial canary in the coal mine, announcing to the world that the threat of a "silent spring" is more than ever before us and on a truly global scale.[13]

There is no escaping this global ecological contradiction other than through forms of conscious, rational control that capitalism is inherently incapable of providing. "Freedom in this sphere [the realm of natural necessity]," Marx wrote in Capital, "can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bring it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power, accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature." The impairment under capitalism of the metabolic relation between human beings and the earth (or soil), he argued, created conditions compelling "its systematic restoration as a regulative law of social production, and in a form adequate to

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the full development of the human race." Hence, the "conscious and rational treatment of the land as permanent communal property" is "the inalienable condition for the existence and reproduction of the chain of human generations"— what we refer to today as "sustainable development."[14]

There are, as Harvey warns us, dangers in such a call for rational social control of the human relation to nature. Capitalism too insists on the need for social controls—and seeks to bend the process in its own direction. Human "hubris"—insufficiently sensitive to ecological necessity—could create new disasters. All one can say in response is that confronting such problems is what social and ecological revolution is all about. To refuse to engage with the problem is to give up on humanity—and the earth—with at this point quite predictable results.

NOTES

1. David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996), p. 194.
2. The epigraph for Carson's book was taken from Albert Schweitzer who wrote: "Man has lost the capability to foresee and forestall. He will end by destroying the earth." See the interesting discussion of "environmental apocalypticism" in Laurence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 280-308.
3. Stephen Jay Gould, *Eight Little Piggies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 49.
4. Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H Ehrlich, *Betrayal of Science and Reason: How Anti-Environmental Rhetoric Threatens Our Future* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996).
5. "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity" in Ehrlich and Ehrlich, *Betrayal of Science and Reason*, pp. 242-50. See also John Bellamy Foster, John Jermier and Paul Shrivastava, "Global Environmental Crisis and Ecosocial Reflection and Inquiry," *Organization & Environment*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1997), pp. 5-8.
6. Peter M. Vitousek, Harold A. Mooney, Jane Lubchenco, Jerry M. Melillo, "Human Domination of Earth's Ecosystems," *Science*, July 25, 1997, pp. 494-99.
7. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "A Critique of Political Ecology," *New Left Review*, 84 (March-April 1974), p. 26.

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8. Joseph Schumpeter, *Essays* (Cambridge, MA.: Addison-Wesley Press, 1951), p. 293. John Stuart Mill is noteworthy among classical economists for believing that a capitalist economy would eventually terminate in a "stationary state" with little or no growth in population or output, and that this would allow for the development of a more comfortable relation between human beings and nature (as well as an end to class struggle). Insofar as he believed that economic growth would gradually end with no resulting social disruption he greatly underestimated the contradictions built into the laws of motion of capitalism. Today certain ecological economists, such as Herman Daly, see themselves as direct descendants of Mill, arguing for a steady-state market economy as the answer to the world's ecological problems. These thinkers are, if anything, more unrealistic in their assessment of capitalism than Mill himself. See John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, Book IV, in Mill, *Collected Works* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 752-57; Herman Daly, *Beyond Growth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).
9. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1976), p. 381. Marx theorized the existence of general barriers to capital attributable to production in general (and to natural conditions) as well as more specific barriers attributable to capital. See Michael Lebowitz, "The General and Specific in Marx's Theory of Crisis," *Studies in Political Economy*, no. 7 (Winter 1982), pp. 5-25.
10. George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), pp. 140-45.
11. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 8.
12. Ibid., p. 13.
13. Kathryn Phillips, *Tracking the Vanishing Frogs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
14. Marx, *Capital*, vol 1, p. 638, *Capital*, vol. 3 (New York: Vintage, 1981), pp. 948-49, 959. See also István Mészáros, *The Necessity of Social Control* (London: Merlin, 1971). Reprinted in Mészáros, *Beyond Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995).

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MARXISM, METAPHORS, AND ECOLOGICAL POLITICS

by DAVID HARVEY

It has, unfortunately, taken far too long for Marxists to take environmental issues seriously. There are some good reasons for this, including the undoubtedly "bourgeois" flavor of many of the issues politicized under that heading (such as "quality of life" for the relatively affluent, romanticism of nature, and sentimentality about animals) and the middle class domination of environmental movements. Against this, it must also be recognised that communist/socialist government have often ignored environmental issues to their own detriment (the pollution of Lake Baikal, the destruction of the Aral Sea, deforestation in China, being environmental disasters commensurate with many of those attributable to capitalism). Environmental issues must be taken seriously. The only interesting question is how to do it.

I criticized John Bellamy Foster's *The Vulnerable Planet* ("TVP") in my book *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* ("JNGD") because I think he takes some wrong turns in confronting the problem. While I applaud his attempts to link the production of many environmental problems to the dynamics of capitalism (and agree with much of what he has to

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say on that topic), he concedes far too much to the rhetoric of the environmentalists. Like many others on the left who take environmentalism seriously, he treads on dangerous conceptual ground without recognizing it. In particular, he appeals to metaphors that create political difficulties rather than advantages for socialists.

I would like to make two main points in response to his comments. The first is that the metaphors to which we necessarily appeal in our discourses about "nature" are dangerous (see JNGD, chapter 7). We cannot do without them, but we should proceed with caution and select with care. They cannot be laid aside as Foster does with a casual "they are not to be taken too literally." Some metaphors can just as easily work as justifications for ecofascism and sociobiology as for socialism. The second point is that, while it is important to do a careful and respectful reading of what environmentalists say (everything from deep ecology and social anarchism, through the "scientific and managerial" literature, to the environmental justice movement) we do not have to give up on our own language (Marxism) in order to translate much of what is important in their arguments into our own political tradition. I illustrate these two points by taking up two issues brought up in his book and in his commentary on JNGD.

Metaphors of Crisis, Collapse and "The End of Nature"

The idea of crisis, imminent collapse, or even "the end of nature" plays an overwhelmingly powerful role in shaping most varieties of environmental discourse. The appeal of this rhetoric to the left is partly based on displacing the crisis and collapse rhetoric about capitalism from class conflict to the environmental issue. Foster (TVP) opens his argument thus: "the destruction of the planet in the sense of making it unusable for human purposes has grown to such an extent that it *now threatens the continuation of much of nature*, as well as the survival and development of society itself" (my italics draw attention to a different part of the sentence then that emphasized in Foster's comment).

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I re-emphasize here my view that a socialist politics that rests on the view that environmental catastrophe is imminent is a sign of weakness. It echoes that long and not very impressive history of proclaiming "the final collapse of capitalism" in the Marxist tradition. This does not mean there are no environmental problems. But we should resist the idea that the very existence of a "vulnerable planet" (Foster's term) is threatened.

Leaving aside the question (which mainly preoccupies Foster) of whether we can indeed 'threaten the continuation of much of nature," in the short or long run, there are short-run political difficulties with the idea. If the collapse does not materialize in the near term or the grounds for such expectations are seriously disputed, with strong appeals to both scientific theory and evidence, then environmentalism in general (including its socialist variant) gets discredited for crying "wolf" too often. There is now a whole genre of writing along those lines. Not all of it comes form the right wing and some of the rebuttals, such as that of the Ehrlichs and the statement of the World Scientists, cited so approvingly by Foster, are every bit as problematic as the literature they rebut. The Ehrlichs' position on population control is very hard for socialists to accept and the language of "humanity on a collision course with the natural world" reeks of those abstract and ideological conceptions of which Marx complained "whenever (natural scientists) venture beyond the bounds of their own specialities."[1] Looking for signs of catastrophe (always popular with the media) may also divert our attention from some of the longer-term more gradual changes that ought also to command our attention. Besides, I am by no means as sanguine as many that a rhetoric of crisis and imminent catastrophe will sharpen our minds in the direction of class politics or even cooperative, collective, and democratic responses as opposed to a "lifeboat ethic" in which the powerful pitch the rest overboard.

It is primarily for this reason also that the invocation of "limits" and "ecoscarcity" as a means to focus our attention upon environmental issues makes me as politically nervous as

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it makes me theoretically suspicious (see JNGD, pp. 139-49). While there are versions of this argument that accept that "limits and "ecoscarcities" are socially evaluated and produced (in which case the question of limits in nature gets so softened as to become almost irrelevant), it is hard to keep this line of thinking from slipping into some version of naturalism (the absolutism of fixed limits in nature) or, worse still, Malthusianism (even to the point where many radical environmentalists now claim that Malthus was right rather than wrong—and I note here that Foster (TVP) heads his list of environmental difficulties with the politically loaded Malthusian term "overpopulation," without any qualification, and approvingly quotes Malthusians like the Ehrlichs at several points in his book as well as in his comments).

We have, I want to suggest, a choice of background metaphors for our deliberations. Against the idea that we are headed over the cliff into some abyss (collapse) or that we are about to run into a solid and immovable brick wall (limits), I think it far more consistent with both the better sorts of environmental thinking and Marx's dialectical materialism to construe ourselves as embedded within an on-going flow of living processes that we can individually and collectively affect through our actions, at the same time as we are profoundly affected by all manner of events (some self-induced) within the world we inhabit. To construe ourselves as active agents caught within the "web of life" is a much more useful metaphor than the linear thinking that has us heading off a cliff or crashing into a brick wall.[2]

But it is then necessary to find a way to construct socialist environmentalist perspectives within the "web of life" metaphor. It is first useful to consider the directly "negative" and "positive" consequences of diverse human activities, both for ourselves (with appropriate concern for class, social, and national distinctions) and for others (including non-human species and whole habitats). But, even more importantly, we need to recognize how our actions filter through the web of interconnections that make up the living world with all manner of unintended consequences. Foster is here quite correct

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to point out that the question of scale (both temporal and, I also add, geographical) is vital to how we identify and assess the seriousness of environmental issues (this point is also made in JNGD, pp. 203-4, but needs much more detailed elaboration). Global issues (warming and loss of biodiversity) contrast with micro-local issues (radon in the basement) and short-term difficulties intermingle with long-term trends. I agree in principle, however, that we need to focus on the transformations occurring around us and not try to get ourselves off the hook by invoking, for example, geological time as opposed to historical time. (Ironically, Foster tries to deflect the force of my criticism by making it sound as if I may be correct geologically but incorrect historically!)

How, then, should we assess our contemporary situation? A strong case can be made that the environmental transformations now underway are larger scale, riskier, and more far-reaching and complex in their implications (materially, spiritually, aesthetically) than ever before in human history (cf. the citation from *Science* given in Foster's comment). The quantitative shifts that have occurred in the last half of the twentieth century in, for example, scientific knowledge and engineering capacities, industrial output, waste generation, urbanization, population growth, international trade, fossil fuel consumption, resource extraction—just to name some of the most important features—imply a qualitative shift in environmental impacts and potential unintended consequences that require a comparable qualitative shift in our responses and our thinking. The web of planetary life has become heavily permeated with human influences (on this point Foster and I clearly agree). The environmental movement (broadly understood) has pioneered in alerting us to some of the risks and uncertainties entailed. As a result, we now see that there is far more to the environmental issue than the conventional Malthusian view that population growth might outstrip resources and generate crises of subsistence. (Up until as late as the 1970s this was the dominant form environmentalism took.) Furthermore, the evidence for widespread unintended consequences (some distinctly harmful to us and

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others unnecessarily harmful to other species) of such massive environmental changes, though not uncontested, is far more persuasive (cf. the case of the disappearing frogs cited by Foster) than the idea that we are reaching some limit, that environmental catastrophe is just around the corner or that we are about to destroy the planet earth.

Prudence in the face of such risks is a perfectly reasonable posture. This provides a more likely basis for forging some collective sense (and a class politics) of how to approach environmental issues. There are, however, several points to be made here. First, the definition of "environmental issues" has its own particular bias, with those that affect the poor, the marginalised, and the working classes frequently being ignored (occupational safety and health, for example) while those that affect the rich and the affluent get emphasized (for example, poverty is a far more important cause of shortened life expectations in the United States than smoking, but it is smoking that gets all the attention). Secondly, environmental impacts frequently have a social bias (class, racial, gender discriminations are evident in, say, the location of toxic waste sites and the global impacts of resource depletion or environmental degradation). Thirdly, some risks and uncertainties can strike anywhere, even against the rich and the powerful. The smoke from the fires that raged in Indonesia in the fall of 1997 did not respect national or class boundaries any more than did the cholera that swept nineteenth century cities, the latter provoking a universal rather than specifically class-based approach to public health. The threat of increased hurricane frequencies from global warming terrifies insurance companies as much as it irritates General Motors and the oil companies to hear that they should cut back on their global plans for expansion because of the threat of emissions to the atmosphere. Finally, the distinction between the production/prevention of risks and the capitalistic bias towards consumption/commodification of cures has significance.

Once the environmental issue is conceptualized in part as directly a class issue, then this configuration of arguments fits into a definite kind of class politics. We need, in the first

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instance, to understand the specific class content and definition of environmental issues and seek alliances around their resolution (as, for example, in the environmental justice movement—see JNGD chapter 13). The politics of this kind of environmental improvement can then replicate that which limited the length of the working day as "the working class's power of attack grew with the number of its allies in those social layers not directly interested in the question."[3]

But there is a more general point. The risk and uncertainty we now experience acquires its scale, complexity, and far-reaching implications by virtue of processes that have produced the massive industrial, technological, urban, demographic, lifestyle, and intellectual transformations that we have witnessed in the latter half of the twentieth century. In this, a relatively small number of key institutions, such as the modern state and its adjuncts, multinational firms and finance capital, and "big" science and technology, have played a dominant and guiding role. For all the inner diversity, some sort of hegemonic economistic-engineering discourse has also come to dominate discussion of environmental questions, commodifying everything and subjecting almost all transactions (including those connected to the production of knowledge) to the singular logic of commercial profitability and the cost-benefit calculus. The production of our environmental difficulties, both for the working class, the marginalised and the impoverished (many of whom have had their resource base stripped from under them by a rapacious commercialism) as well as for some segments of capital and the rich and the affluent, is broadly the result of this hegemonic class project (and its reigning neoliberal philosophy). It invites as response an equally hegemonic class project of risk prevention and reduction, resource recuperation and control, in which the working class and the marginalised could take a leading role. In performing that role the whole question of constructing an alternative mode of production, exchange and consumption that is risk reducing and environmentally, as well as socially, just and sensitive can be posed. Such a politics must rest on the creation of class alliances in which the environ-

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mental issue and a more satisfying "relation to nature" have a prominent place alongside the reconstruction of social relations and modes of production and consumption. A political project of this sort does not, I insist, need a rhetoric of limits or collapse to work effectively and well. But it does require careful and respectful negotiation with many environmental movements that clearly see that capitalism is incompatible with a satisfactory resolution of the environmental questions that bother them.

"Nature Knows Best"

Let it be said at the outset that "negotiation" with environmentalists can be tough and often frustrating given the passion with which they believe in their particular causes. That passion is often infectious and captivating (particularly in a political climate where cynicism abounds) leading those of us on the left who wish to take environmental issues seriously with little option except to concede something to environmental rhetoric. But I think we should be careful as to what we will or will not concede. To paraphrase James Boyd White, we should not feel that respect for environmentalism obliges us to erase our own political culture as if all value lay with them and none with us.[4]

Foster (119-24) uncritically takes the principle "nature knows best" from Commoner[5]—which is a seemingly respectable source. Such a proposition has wide currency within the environmental movement, embracing much of deep ecology (Naess), the land ethicists (followers of Leopold), ecofeminists, and a wide range of ecocentric movements. It is closely associated with the idea that values are in some sense "intrinsic" or "inherent" in nature. I cannot possibly unpack all the various meanings which attach to that idea here (see JNGD chapter 7), but I think Foster is wrong to advance "nature knows best" as an acceptable principle for the left.

And here is why. If nature knows best and we want the best then we should surrender our own judgement to what nature knows. But how do we know what nature knows? Sociobiologists (E. O. Wilson) and evolutionists (R. Dawkins)

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claim that their detailed studies of nature give them a privileged position to tell us what nature knows and that "science may soon be in a position to investigate the very origin and meaning of human values, from which all ethical pronouncements and much of political practice flow."[6] Now I am sure that Foster would not want to be tarred with such thinking. (Indeed, his proclaimed anthropocentrism elsewhere puts him in opposition to it.) Worse still, the Nazis also claimed the mantle of following natural law as do a whole swathe of supremacist movements that believe in some version of social Darwinism or even a modified creationism (which is singularly patriarchal in tone). We can, of course, dispute that this is what nature knows, but then the whole discussion gets out of hand and quite absurd, (or purely tautological, as with the social ecologists' thesis that "humanity is nature becoming conscious of itself") with every prophet, mystic, and seer, as well as mad scientist claiming to have the inside track on what nature knows or what it is important to be conscious about.

I prefer to take the view that nature knows nothing in particular though we, as human beings, know a lot about what we, as a species, have and can do to each other, to ourselves and to the world we inhabit. Socialist politics is about using that accumulated knowledge for distinctively socialist ends. Those ends have nothing whatsoever to do with what nature knows. But they have everything to do with our understanding of how nature works and certainly ought also to have a lot to say about what our individual and collective relation to nature as well as to each other should be.

Towards a Basic Formulation

We clearly need a socialist language in which to articulate environmental issues. The proposal I ventured in JNGD is to construct a language of dialectics and of historical-geographical materialism. The basic formulation goes roughly like this. We are a species on earth like any other, endowed, like any other, with specific capacities and powers that are put to use to modify environments in ways that are conducive to our own sustenance and reproduction. In this we are no different from

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all other species (from termites to beavers) that modify their environments while adapting further to the environments they themselves help construct.

This is the fundamental conception of the dialectics of social and ecological change. It is, as Marx put it, "the nature imposed condition of our existence" that we are in a metabolic relation to the world around us, that we modify it at the same time as we modify ourselves through our activities and labors. But, we like all other species, have some very species-specific capacities and powers, arguably the most important of which in our case are our ability to alter and adapt to our forms of social organization—to create, for example, class structures and institutions—to build a long historical memory through language, to accumulate knowledge and understandings that are collectively available to us as guide to future action, to reflect on what we have done and do in ways that permit learning from experience, and, by virtue of our particular dexterities, to build all kinds of adjuncts (e.g. tools, technologies, organizational forms and communications systems) to enhance our capacities and powers. The effect is to make the speed and scale of adaption to and transformation of our species being and of our species environment highly sensitive to the pace and direction of cultural, technological, economic, social and political changes. In recent times, such changes have increasingly become captive of capitalistic modes of behavior, organization, social relations and ways of thought.

This conception is species centered and thereby commits me resolutely to an anthropocentric stance. I cannot see (here, too, I agree with Foster) that we can ever avoid asserting our own identity, being expressive of who we are and what we can become, and asserting our species capacities and powers in the world we inhabit. To construe the matter any other way is, in my view, to fool ourselves (alienate ourselves) as to who and what we are. In this sense the Marxian concept of "species being" continues to resonate. But if our task is "to be distinctively ourselves in a world of others," this does not mean that we cannot, if we wish, "create a frame that includes both self

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and other, neither dominant, in an image of fundamental equality."[7] We can strive to think like a mountain, like the ebola virus, or like the spotted owl, and construct our actions in response to such imaginaries, but it is still we who do the thinking and we who choose to use our capacities and powers that way. And that principle applies cross-culturally too. I can strive to think like an Aborigine, like a Chipko peasant, like Rupert Murdoch (for he inhabits a cultural world I find hard to comprehend). In these cases, however, my capacity to empathize and put myself in the other's shoes is further aided by the possibility to translate across languages and to study material activities and variegated attitudes to nature through careful observation. But it is still an "I" or a "we" who does the imagining and the translation and it is always in the end through my (our) language that the thinking gets expressed. The political and ethical thrust here lies of course in the choice to try to think like the other, the choice of who or what I try to think like (why a mountain and not the ebola virus or why a Chipko peasant and not Rubert Murdoch?) And the effort to build frames of thought and action that relate across self and others in particular ways. And we do all of that because that is how we can explore our capacities and powers and become something other than what we already are. If respect and love of others is vital to respect and love of self, then socialists should surely approach all others, including that of nature, in exactly such a spirit. Concern for our environment is concern for ourselves.

I here learn a great deal from trying to understand ecocentric lines of thought and the works, for example, of deep ecologists, land ethicists, and animal rights theorists. I may not accept their views but I do respect them and try as faithfully as I can to transcribe and translate their thoughts into my own resolutely anthropocentric and Marxian framework. They help concentrate my mind on the qualitative as well as the quantitative conditions of our metabolic relation to the world and raise important issues about the manner of relating across species and ecological boundaries that have traditionally been left on one side in many Marxist accounts.

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I am aided in this by a striking parallel between a relational version of dialectics (which has always been central to my own interpretation of the Marxian tradition) and many other forms of environmental discourses. From deep ecology and other "green" critiques of Enlightenment and Cartesian instrumentality (including those developed in ecofeminism) I find sustenance for a more nuanced dialectical and process-based argument concerning our positionality in the natural world. Writers as diverse as Whitehead and Cobb, Naess, and Plumwood have something important to say on this and I do not find it impossible to translate at least some of what they say into the language of a relational Marxism. This does not lead me to accept some of the more strident rejections of Enlightenment thought (indeed, I think on balance it was positive and liberatory), but it reinforces a rejection of mechanistic and positivist accounts of our postionality in an relation to the rest of the natural world that have often infected Marxism as well as conventional bourgeois forms of analysis.

Marxism emphasizes, of course, the role of transformative activity—human labor—as fundamental to our species being. The evolution of human societies through organization of labor process is an integral part of the evolutionary process in general. Marx was, I believe, broadly right to see his studies on a continuum with those of Darwin, though of course, it is the evolution of our specific species-powers that form the main focus of Marx's attention. This focus on the labor process as the active point at which we as a species appropriate the grand other of the natural world we inhabit is vital to my own conception and I wish that more environmentalists would focus on it (rather than drifting off, as so many do, into more mystical, contemplative, or "consumerist"—e.g. nature as a positional good—ways of thinking). We can never ignore the conditions (social, political, economic) under which we appropriate and transform the world around us in accordance with our needs, wants, and desires. Nor can we ignore the extraordinary achievements of the bourgeois era in creating new technological, social and political possibilities and developing extraordinarily sophisticated organiza-

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tional forms (divisions of labor, specializations of functions, institutional structures, forms of governance). How we "make a living" and organize our life chances is always a fundamental materialist reference point. To abandon it is, in Marxian language, to become alienated. To abandon the world of possibilities that the bourgeois era has created is to try to go backwards (as so many environmentalists are prone to do) rather than forward into some more satisfying relation to nature and to others. And one of the possibilities opened up is to manage our relations with each other as well as with the natural world in a far more prudent, satisfying and cautionary way than is currently the case.

There is, then, plenty of room for expansion of the Marxian argument through engagement with environmentalism. If, as Marx put it, we change ourselves through changing the world and if, at the end of every labor process we get a result that existed in our imagination before being converted into a material fact through labor, then there is a distinctive role for the imaginary, both in defining the nature of labor processes and, even more importantly, in defining who and what we might or will become through a restructuring of our metabolic interactions in the world. The implication is that no socialist project to transform social relations can afford to ignore the experiential qualities (including aesthetic and emotive responses and meanings) of metabolic relations; the imaginary of socialist transformation must focus as much upon its relational embeddedness in the natural world and upon its metabolic conditions as upon social relations and power structures. Struggles for emancipation and self-realization are multi- rather than uni-dimensional. There the general lines of the "green" critique of Marxism have been helpful in forcing us to re-assess the powers of our own linguistic tradition. But it is also vital to hold fast to the principles that (1) all projects to transform ecological relations are simultaneously projects to transform social relations, and (2) transformative activity (labor) lies at the heart of the whole dialectics of social and environmental change.

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But which social relations need to be transformed? The traditional Marxist focus has, of course, been on those of class, but environmentalists as well as many others have insisted that there is much more to it than that. Emancipation from conditions of dependence coupled with self-realization are both noble Enlightenment aims deserving of unashamed re-affirmation and extension across the whole spectrum of sociality. Issues of gender, of reproduction activities, of what happens in the living space as well as in the workspace, of group difference, of cultural diversity and of local autonomy deserve careful consideration. A more nuanced view of the interplay between environmental transformations and sociality is seriously called for and I think we, on the left, should embrace rather than reject that idea even though we quite properly insist that the class dimension is fundamental because that is what capitalism is always about.

On the other hand, Marxists scarcely need any urging to see that nothing short of a radical replacement of the capitalist mode of production will suffice to institute a new and saner regime of socio-ecological relations. Commodification and market processes cannot provide answers to most of the environmental problems we encounter (indeed, they are a central part of the problem). The importance of a radical agenda, clearly recognized throughout much of the non-managerial wing of environmentalism, arises for the very simple reason that the options open within the hegemonic powers of capitalistic institutions and processes are far too limited in relation to the risks we face. If, for example, the strategy of the automobile industry is to bring China up to the levels of the United States in car ownership then it hardly needs emphasizing that the environmental risks are huge. And even that wing of capitalism that acknowledges that something called "sustainability" has importance, judges sustainability as much in terms of continuous capital accumulation as it does in terms of socio-ecological well-being. From this standpoint, it seems that there is no option except to engage in massive confrontations with many of the central institutions of a capitalistic world order. On this point I know that Foster and I would

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thoroughly agree and want to make common cause. It is a nexus where much of the left and many within the environmental movement can also converge to make common cause if they do wish. And it just as surely defines the foundations for an ecologically sensitive Marxism.

NOTES

1. Marx, K., *Capital*, vol. I (New York: Viking, 1977), p. 494.
2. See, e.g., Capra, F., *The Web of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1996) for an environmentalist collaboration of this concept.
3. Marx, K., *Capital*, vol. I, p. 409.
4. White, J., *Justice as Translation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).
5. Commoner, B., *The Closing Circle* (New York: Knopf, 1971).
6. Wilson, E., *On Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) p. 5.
7. White, J., op. cit., pp. 257-64.

REJOINDER TO HARVEY

by JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER

I am not as worried as Harvey about Marxism succumbing to "the rhetoric of the environmentalists." Historical materialism is a mode of inquiry (and a form of revolutionary praxis) that, if it has any lasting meaning, develops in response to changing conditions and new vernacular traditions.[1] *The Vulnerable Planet* was originally inspired by an essay entitled "The Vulnerable Earth: Toward a Planetary History" by U.S. environmental historian Donald Worster.[2] I wrote the book with two thoughts uppermost in my mind: that a historical materialism that did not embrace environmental issues was—

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in this day and age—hopelessly inadequate; and that an environmentalism not rooted in historical materialism was hopelessly lost. I am convinced that Marx's critique of the political economy of capital also contained within it the fundamental elements of a political-ecological critique of capitalism. Yet to deal with ecological problems today, the classical legacy of Marxism is not enough, and must be supplemented with some of the insights of contemporary radical ecology.

These days skepticism toward science is widespread. Nevertheless, I was unprepared for Harvey's contention that the views of the World Scientists' (referring to the "World Scientists Warning to Humanity" signed in 1992 by over 1,500 senior scientists including more than half of the recipients of the Nobel Prize among living scientists—see my article above) "are every bit as problematic as the literature they rebut." In his book Harvey refers to Greg Easterbrook and Julian Simon as examples of the opposing, anti-environmental (self-styled "ecorealist") point of view.[3]

Among those who signed the World Scientists' Warning we find figures like Hans Bethe, Robert Gallo, Stephen Jay Gould, Stephen Hawking, Jane Lubchenco, Howard Odum, Linus Pauling, Ilya Prigogine, Carl Sagan, James Watson, and Edward O. Wilson. The credibility of scientists such as these in this area has to be considered far beyond that of an establishment journalist like Easterbrook who ends his book by assuring his readers that we can "terraform" Mars if we run out of ecological space on earth, thereby giving us "two biospheres for every one that exists today."[4] Simon, for his part, is a conservative, anti-environmental economist, best known as a proponent of what has been called the "weak sustainability hypothesis": the idea that increases in economic wealth as measured by the market can substitute completely for any losses in natural wealth.

In dismissing the World Scientists' Warning Harvey claims that their metaphor of a "collision" of humanity with the earth is "abstract and ideological." Yet, this ignores the significance of this particular metaphor within contemporary science. The most recent of the great mass extinctions (there

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have been five extinctions in which 65 percent or more of species died out in a brief geological instant) was quite likely the result, many scientists now believe, of the collision of an asteroid with the earth some 65 million years ago—the end-Cretaceous extinction resulting in the demise of the dinosaurs. Hence, the collision metaphor implicitly invites a direct comparison of the human impact on the earth with that of the probable cause of the fifth mass extinction. Recently, scientists have warned that we are on the verge of "the sixth extinction"—this time at the hand of humanity.[5]

I rubbed my eyes in disbelief when reading Harvey's charge that I had slipped into Malthusianism by referring to the "Malthusian term overpopulation"—in a litany of environmental problems on the opening page of chapter one of my book—and by "approvingly" quoting the Ehrlichs and other Malthusians at various points in my writing. It is news to me that "overpopulation" is simply a "Malthusian term." Marx and Engels pointed to the possibility of overpopulation, as have many Marxists and socialists. In his very first essay on political economy, for example, Engels observed that,

> Even if Malthus were completely right, this transformation [i.e. social revolution] would have to be undertaken on the spot, for only this transformation and the education of the masses which it alone provides makes possible the moral restraint of the propagative instinct which Malthus himself presents as the most effective and easiest remedy for over-population.[6]

Although it is true that Malthusians have made overpopulation the cause of all social and environmental problems, it does not follow logically that all those who consider population growth to be a problem or who at times use the term "overpopulation"—always to be understood in relation to existing social relations as well as the limits of the earth—are thereby Malthusian. In my book I attack Malthus and Malthusianism throughout. Where population issues are concerned I rely primarily on the theory of demographic transition (particularly as advanced by Barry Commoner in opposition to the views of Paul Ehrlich), which has a long history within socialist analysis. Moreover, the argument of the

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book clearly states that it is the accumulation of capital not population which is the leading source of environmental problems.

It is hard to know what to say when Harvey points to the fact that I occasionally quote favorably from the Ehrlichs and other Malthusians, as evidence of my having slipped into Malthusianism—especially since Harvey has nothing to say about the specific content of the quotations to which he refers. The logic of this escapes me. Marx quoted approvingly from Ricardo and John Stuart Mill (noted Malthusians), and from Carlyle (an ultra racist, author of *The Nigger Question*). This does not mean that Marx was in danger of slipping into Malthusianism or racism.

As a further example of my alleged tendency to succumb to the "rhetoric of environmentalism," Harvey chastises me for "uncritically" taking "the principle 'nature knows best' from [Barry] Commoner." Actually *The Vulnerable Planet* makes only passing reference to Commoner's informal ecological law of "nature knows best" along with his other three informal laws ("everything is connected to everything else," "everything must go somewhere," and "there's no such thing as a free lunch," i.e. "nothing comes from nothing") which were used merely as a springboard for the development of an argument on the anti-ecological tendencies of capitalism. And even then it can hardly be said that Commoner's principle was introduced "uncritically." As I observed in a footnote at this point in the argument: "Commoner's third law should not be taken too literally." As Haila and Levins write, "The conception that 'nature knows best' is relativized by the contingency of evolution.'"[7]

The argument of Haila and Levins (both distinguished representatives of ecological science, and in Levins' case an important contributor to MR) is worth following further. Without categorically rejecting what Commoner himself describes as a mere "shorthand" expression, these authors attempt to define nature's requirements more precisely. "Nature," they tell us, "is mute, she does not give us explicit advice; she only forbids," often only post factum.[8]

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For example, Commoner's argument revolves around the introduction of synthetic chemicals. The petrochemical industry has managed to inject 70,000 new synthetic chemical compounds—not the product of evolution and not easily reabsorbable (at least on a human time scale)—into the biosphere. As Commoner writes, "these synthetic compounds are sufficiently different from ... natural compounds to ... disrupt normal biochemistry, leading to mutations, cancer, and in many different ways to death. In effect, the petrochemical industry produces substances that ... cunningly enter the chemistry of life, and attack it."[9]

The problem is that these chemicals were introduced to promote profits without any accounting of the overall ecological effects. It was the post factum realization that nature forbids such heavy reliance on these "elixirs of death" (as Carson called pesticides, one deadly branch of these new chemical compounds) that prompted Carson to write *Silent Spring* and *Commoner The Closing Circle.*

In the end what disturbs me most about Harvey's argument is the suggestion that we should back off from talking about ecological catastrophe since it is not a good basis for socialist politics. "A socialist politics that rests on the view that environmental catastrophe is imminent," he writes, "is a sign of weakness.... I am by no means as sanguine as many that a rhetoric of crisis and imminent catastrophe will sharpen our minds in the direction of class politics or even cooperative and democratic responses as opposed to a 'lifeboat ethic' in which the powerful pitch the rest overboard."

There are two issues here. First, the question of whether or not humanity is presently on a collision course with the earth is largely an empirical question. It is not one that we should deny or affirm on the grounds of political convenience.

Second, there is the issue of the basis of socialist politics. Harvey suggests that this must be rooted as directly as possible on class, which he sees at odds with the general thrust of ecological politics, with the exception of the environmental justice movement. I would agree that environmental politics

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(separated out from class politics) cannot be the basis for socialist politics. But it is only a narrow conception of class (and of the environment) that forces us to keep these elements separate. Marx repeatedly emphasized that the exploitation (or degradation) of the worker and of the soil were two sides of the same break in the social metabolism resulting from the logic of capital. Both have to be taken into consideration in any critique of capital. Capital, by its own nature, tends to go beyond its own absolute limits, and to undermine everything beyond itself in the attempt to absorb it within itself. What revolutionary ecology teaches us, and what it adds to the class struggle, is an understanding of the thoroughness with which the capital relation must be overthrown. Nowadays we can no longer afford to think in terms of justice alone, but we must also address the issue of sustainability. Socialism must become ecological without ceasing to be socialism. Indeed a good case can be made that in Marx's view the two were inseparable.

NOTES

1. See Teodor Shanin, ed., *Late Marx and the Russian Road* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 243-75.
2. Donald Worster, "The Vulnerable Earth: Toward a Planetary History," in Worster ed., *The Ends of the Earth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 3-20.
3. Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), p. 195.
4. Greg Easterbrook, *A Moment on the Earth* (New York: Viking, 1995), pp. 687-88.
5. See Richard Leakey and Roger Levin, *The Sixth Extinction* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 44-56.
6. Friedrich Engels, "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy," in Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p.221.
7. John Bellamy Foster, *The Vulnerable Planet* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994), p. 154.
8. Yrj Haila and Richard Levins, *Humanity and Nature* (London: Pluto Press, 1992), p. 13.
9. Barry Commoner, *Making Peace with the Planet* (New York: The New Press, 1992), pp. 13-14.

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NORTH KOREA DIARY

by HUGH DEANE

The desire to travel, whether to be warm in a cold season or from curiosity, can be a material force that, understood, helps to explain both the behavior of birds and history. In recent times, as this force became "tourism," a certain uniformity of experience characteristic of commodity form appeared. North Korea is one of the few places on the globe the rich cannot more or less freely visit. Therefore we provide you the useful anachronism of the diary of an intelligent traveller to North Korea. This is but a quick impression of a place where tragedy and resistance have been daily fare for quite some time.

—The Editors

October 22, 1997

This is our first full day in Pyongyang.

Arriving from Beijing by a Koryo plane yesterday afternoon, we are immediately taken to bow before a bronze statue of Kim Il Sung. We are handed a bouquet of flowers to add to those at the base of the statue.

We are an American delegation of just three, all with some friendliness toward the north in our past—Dr. Charles M. Grossman, internist, active in the Physicians for Social Responsibility and in a newly formed committee, Americans

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for a New Relationship with Korea, and Howard Glazer, a progressive architect with China experience, both from Portland, Oregon , and the author, an editor and writer from New York City engaged in writing a book about the Korean war. We traveled together in China a year earlier.

In the morning we are taken to see monumnts—Kim Il Sung's birthplace, a thatched roof farm house, which expanding Pyongyang has enveloped; a triumphal arch honoring the Workers Party (Communist) on its 50th anniversary; a soaring round tower memorializing *juche,* an elusive concept for foreigners which Kim Il Sung has described as a theory "that man is the master of everything and decides everything...."

In the afternoon a request of mine is realized, a visit to the huge war museum. To see all 80 detailed exhibits might take a week, so we see only selected ones having to do with the origins of the 1950-1953 war and some of the important battles. Neither on the walls nor in the English-language booklets I bought in the museum shop was there even a mention of the major Chinese role in the war, which, indeed, at the cost of enormous casualties, saved the Kim Il Sung regime. I inquired of course and was told that exhibits having to do with the Chinese intervention were being reworked. I learned also that on October 25th, the anniversary of the date Beijing announced its intervention, a Chinese delegation took war artifacts to the museum and requested that they be added to the exhibits. Two monuments honoring the Chinese who fought in the war were erected in Pyongyang years ago. We found that out by asking questions.

The account of the start of the war in the museum corrected some obvious American propaganda but did not go beyond Kim Il Sung's statement of June 26, 1950 that the southern army had engaged in a general assault along the 38th parallel. Southern troops may have violated the parallel near the Onjin peninsula in the west in 1950 as they certainly did in 1949, but no peninsula-wide offensive took place.

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Revelations in recent years, including Soviet and Chinese documentation, indicate that Kim Il Sung had determined to try to unify the peninsula by force and eventually gained the acquiesence of Stalin and Mao. He waited for return of the many thousands of Koreans who had served in the People's Liberation Army in the civil war, waited also for what he could call a provocation and then sent battle-tested divisions south. Kim and Syngman Rhee in Seoul were mirror images of each other, both convinced that only military force could achieve unification. Kim ignited the war, but it was a civil war, Koreans invading Korea, a struggle between a revolutionary north and a decidedly rightist south, until the massive American invasion.

At the end of the tour of the museum we found two generals waiting to talk to us. Lieutenant General Kang Tae Mu is a southerner who in 1949 commanded one of two southern companies stationed along the parallel which defected to the north. He told us that he had come to dislike the Syngman Rhee regime and to resent what he saw as American control of the army and that had led him to listen sympathetically to the Pyongyang radio. Many others shared his feelings and so two entire companies went north. Kim Il Sung embraced him as a patriot and he advanced swiftly in the new northern army, becoming a general at age 29.

Major General Kim Tae Hua was there to inform us about the war atrocities. We knew about them but soon found that the general's words had bite. His father, a farmer, had been killed as he worked in a field by a strafing plane, American he was certain. Six other members of his familiy were killed during the brief southern occupation of the north in the fall of 1950.

He said that 200 years from now the atrocities performed by the south Koreans and Americans would live in the hearts of the people.

October 23

Two days a week foreigners are allowed to join in respectful visits to Kim Il Sung's mausoleum, which is his office reconstructed. Today is one of them and we join many Kore-

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ans, entire units and individuals. A moving walkway, the length of a football field, takes us to an escalator and a corridor and to a large hall occupied solely by a statue of Kim Il Sung. We line up in front of it and are asked by a guide to pay homage. We bow with the guides. Several long flights of stairs take us to the bier, enclosed in a glass rectangle. We bow four times, once on each side of it. Then we retrace our steps to sunlight.

Kim Il Sung and his son and successor, Kim Jong Il, are rarely out of sight. Statues at the entrance to public buildings, photos of each in public rooms, billboards, quotations cut in slabs of stone. We see in our hotel and elsewhere giant pictures featuring flowers and are told that they depict new varieties of orchid and begonia developed in Indonesia and Japan and named for Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il. We are shown a long film in which the two Kims are invariably together at ceremonies and inspections.

October 24-28

On each of these days, busy with sightseeing, we learn more about the sad realities beyond what we have come to see as the Pyongyang oasis. We view a long documentary about the floods and talk to both Koreans and UN personnel and other foreigners. One of our two guides had a notebook full of specific data collected on an earlier assignment.

The catastrophe began with the loss of the socialist market—trade with the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and pre-capitalist China. Industry was hard hit; many plants shut down. Then came three years of natural disasters, floods in 1995 and 1996, drought and a giant tidal wave this year. In 1995 the Yalu river, along the northern border, flooded south as torrential rains fell, causing mountain avalanches and rock slides as well as inundated villages. The Korean People's Army evacuated many people in peril, dropping down in helicopters where necessary. The 1996 flood came when the earlier flood had not entirely receded and the damage was even more exensive. Close to a million acres of paddy and dry field were covered with mud or otherwise taken out of cultivation. A million tons of stored grain were washed away. Railroads,

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roads, bridges, dams and irrigation systems suffered. Coal mines were flooded, some to such an extent that they have been abandoned. More industries were lost, some soon torn down for scrap. Then this year the usual rainy season was rainless. Nearly all the maize crop, normally a million tons, was lost. The rice crop was reduced, both because of the drought and because there was no fertilizer to apply to it. Such are the circumstances that brought hunger and starvation to a great many.

A visiting delegation of American doctors, some of them ethnically Korean, found that shortage of medicines is about as serious as the publicized food shortage. Pyongyang hospitals they visited lacked sufficient medicines and adequate equipment. But outside Pyongyang the situation is far worse. The doctors encountered hospitals without medicine—without even aspirin, iodine or alcohol. Patients are being operated on without anesthesia. Much of the equipment is old and unusable, x-ray machines lacked film. Dr. Grossman, back home in Portland, is one of all too few trying to organize a substantial shipment of medicines and equipment.

The UN and other foreigners monitoring food distribution impressed me as hard-working and devoted. The UN's Fund for International Development has worked out a $30 million rescue program—$15 million for fertilizer to be delivered by early April, $15 milllion to replace geese and small animals eaten by the starving. But U.S. approval—essential, I was told—has yet to be obtained.

Some foreigners are pessimistic about the future of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, perhaps influenced by ideology. They suppose that for decades it will be a backward third world country, with only vestiges of industry. One offered this short-hand advice, "Make cheap shoes." Others are more hopeful. A Texan distributing sacks of grain donated by Amigos Internaciones told me that the north can count on one asset—its people.

Organizations fron various countries, some associated with the United Nations World Food Program, have launched or plan specific projects, both humanitarian aid and the kinds

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of assistance needed to address the basic hurts of the economy. One instance is the balanced help being received from the American Friends Service Committee, which began work here in 1980. It has raised $600,000 internationally to provide the Sambong Cooperative with seed, fertilizer and vinyl sheeting as well as medicines, food and clothing, including mittens for the 250 children.

October 24 (going back a few days)

We are driven northwest in our two Mercedes (North Korea bought a fleet of them some years ago) to view the area drowned by a typhoon-generated tidal wave that struck nearly 50 miles of coast, penetrating inland to a depth of about three miles. The wave came ashore in daylight and no lives were lost, but farmhouses, even entire villages were destroyed or damaged. We see ships of 20 to 30 feet that the wave had borne far inland. And we see a coal mine that had escaped earlier floods which the wave had flooded. A serious effect of the inundation is that the land soaked cannot be cultivated for three years or so. It will take that long for rain to wash away the deposits of salt. In towns we drive through we see factories with broken windows, abandoned.

We end the day with a visit to the largest of the Children's Palaces. Like the similar ones in China, it offers after-school activities to thousands of children of all grades. We make the rounds of classes teaching choral singing, the playing of various musical instruments, sketching, performing solo at gatherings. Pyongyang has two palaces. Throughout the country are smaller ones, we were told.

October 25

Today we drive north and somewhat east into the mountains that are North Korea's geographical treasures, the forested mountains which were the scene of skirmishes and battles in the long struggle to win independence from Japan.

The countryside is neat. The rice has been harvested and bundles of straw left in the closely clipped fields; many will be threshed again, a gleaning. The large green cabbage patches

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are being harvested. Cabbages are the principal winter vegetable and the basic ingredient of the national dish, *kim chi,* made a hundred different ways by fermenting cabbage, radish and peppery spices. Some of the villages look new with rows of one-story houses with whitewashed walls, tile roofs and blue painted doors and window frames. Some may replace villages destroyed in the war when the U.S. Air Force bombed the northern dams, sending a torrent of water through fields and villages nearly to Pyongyang.

Our destination is Mount Myohyang, a forested valley with a rushing stream. Kim Il Sung was moved to write a poem on the scene in autumn and chant it from the balcony of the International Friendship Exhibition on October 15, 1979:

On the balcony I see the most
glorious scene in the world...
The Exhibition stands here,
its green eaves upturned, to exalt
The dignity of the nation,
and Piro Peak looks higher still.

The exhibition consists of halls in which are displayed gifts of foreigners to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. The gifts were declared the property of the people and collected here. Jimmy Carter and his wife gave Kim Il Sung handsome glassware and Billy Graham, evangelist, twice in Pyongyang, gave Kim Il Sung gifts twice. Our eyes strayed from the expensive gifts in glass cases inside to the glorious forest and stream outside.

October 26

A Sunday, we go to one of the two Protestant churches. It is simply and elegantly designed and the service is well attended. When it ended, a visiting Japanese pastor came to the podium and apologized at length for Japanese misbehavior in Korea and elsewhere. The Korean pastor translated. Three other Japanese Christians came forward and bowed deeply, their knees on the floor.

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Billy Graham, whose wife grew up in North Korea, preached on two occasions at the other Protestant church. Pyongyang also has a Catholic church. The number of Christians in North Korea is about 11,000. Outside of Pyongyang they worship in house churches, as in China.

October 27

A well-designed broad highway takes us south to Kaesong, capital of the Koryo dynasty (918-1392), close to the 38th parallel. Again the countryside is filled with harvested rice paddies and much cabbage.. Large plots of ginseng, which has to be sheltered as it grows, come on the scene as we near Kaesong. All along young pines tell us of a reforestation effort.

Kaesong, bombed to smithereens like most Korean cities and towns, both north and south, is an almost new city of high rises. A few ancient buildings that survived the bombings can be seen fleetingly between them. From Kaesong we drive a short distance east to Panmunjom, site of the long truce talks. The large building in which the truce agreement was signed is occupied only by bare tables. General Mark Clark said in his memoirs that he signed most reluctantly; Washington ordered him to. Peng Dehuai signed for China. When reporters from Beijing asked to what he attributed his successes as commander of the Chinese forces, he answered in a word, "Marxism." During China's Cultural Revolution, in which he was most unjustly treated, he was criticized for not answering "Mao Zedong Thought."

Americans from the 37,000 occupation force were stationed at the DMZ, the demilitrized zone, up to a year or so ago. They have been replaced by South Korean soldiers from the contingents that are part of all American units. According to northern officers, the south has constructed a cement wall across the peninsula and, denying that it had done so, grown grass on it. We are shown through telescopes several sections of it. We are also shown large southern posters appealing to northerners to cross over. Anyone doing so is promised a good life, including foreign travel.

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On July 8 of 1994 Kim Il Sung at his desk signed a paper setting forth policies aimed at achieving unification. Two hours later, still at his desk, he slumped over, dead. The media here makes much of Kim's concern with unification in his last hours. A quotation from him on the subject is chiseled into granite at the DMZ.

Without consulting any Koreans, Washington and Moscow divided Korea along the 38th parallel in 1945. The stalemated war did not seriously change the division and it continues to divide families and antagonistic political and military entities. Feelings of national shame are shared south and north. The United States is centrally involved. Its garrison of 37,000 troops is justified as forestalling a northern offensive, but the underlying effect, certainly calculated, is to deny unification.

October 28

An inspection of the heavy industry exhibition is both enlightening and sad. The North Korean engineers sometimes improved foreign machinery as they adapted it to their needs. A number of inventions impressed us: a coalmining machine capable of breaking up many tons an hour, a robot to mine lead and zinc, a robot producer of machine tool parts, an off-white building block, larger than a brick and very sturdy, that won the attention and study of Howard Glazer, architect. The sadness is that the disastrous years have destroyed many of the factories capable of putting the displayed machinery to use.

Driving about , we get an admiring sense of Pyongyang. Surely one of the world's most attractive capitals, it was enabled to become so in large part by American bombs. By northern count, the Air Force dropped 428,000 bombs, high explosive and napalm, converting the city into a stretch of rubble and building fragments. So the city planners and designers after the truce in 1953 had a level field to work with, and the result is broad tree-lined streets, straight and curved, many parks, some along the banks of the two rivers, squares setting off imaginatively designed

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public buildings, among them museums, theaters, arenas and a home for the circus.

A forest of mostly high rise apartment houses seem overly similar though balconies give some horizontal lines. Unlike New York, Pyongyang has no homeless, a guide cannot resist telling us. The apartments have three or four rooms. Rents and water are free. Residents pay for electricity and, I suppose, the steam heat piped into buildings by the power plants. Petrol has to be imported and is scarce. Few cars are on the streets but the sparse traffic is directed at intersections by police-women in neat, light blue uniforms. Electrified trams take people to and from work.

North Korea's serious plight is not visible in Pyongyang. The regime seems to be giving priority attention to keeping its appearance normal. A criticism is that far less effort is being paid to other cities and towns, as those visiting or passing through cannot help but immediately notice.

October 29

In North Korea the usual hammer and sickle have a traditional writing brush between them, a consequence of Kim Il Sung's conviction that intellectuals can be good revolutionaries and that humankind must be well educated to advance socially. We visit the huge Korean-style Grand People's Study House which as many as 7,000 come to daily. It houses a multi-million volume library which includes books that may be taken out and some 600 rooms, including lecture halls, study rooms, special collections, a photo center and a printing plant. A feature is a Q and A room in which several professors or scholars, serving in rotation, are always on hand to answer the questions of perplexed students.

We are shown a music room composed of scores of listening stations. Those coming to it may sign up for an album of Korean or foreign music, take it to a station, clap on ear phones and listen without disturbing others. We are told about collections for study of science and art.

A quotation from Kim Il Sung begins, "Books are silent teachers...." The study house is described as ":an important

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base of intellectualizing the whole of society and a correspondence university of the working people." Professionals and workers may add to their knowledge by taking short courses or attending special lectures.

October 30

We are taken through the Korean history museum and folklore museum. They make evident to observers with China knowledge a truth unacknowledged by the museum guide and the texts on the walls—China contributed very much to the shaping of the society. Confucianism and Buddhism were dominant imports; the written language of the elite was Chinese. Earlier four Chinese commanderies or colonies were established in Korea, the largest with a population of 300,000, Lolang, near what is now Pyongyang. I discovered that the commanderies and Chinese influence in general get minimum attrention and some erroneous comment. Korean nationalism, long suppressed by the Japanese, is naturally assertive. It expresses a powerful truth. Some in the Korean elite were Sinicized but for the most part foreign influences were absorbed in a homogeneous Korean culture. A distinct language with an alphabet is part of it.

In the afternoon we moved from history to a notable and emotional aspect of the present. Some 150 of the most heroic of the men and women killed in the revolutionary struggle, in the guerrilla war in the north or caught in the underground, are interred, reinterred in many cases, in the Cemetery of Revolutionary Martyrs on Taesong Mountain overlooking the city. Rows of identifyiing stones surmounted by bronze busts descend from a huge flag made of red marble. Among them is Kim Jong Suk, wife of Kim Il Sung and mother of Kim Jong Il. She began revolutionary work at the age of 14. Also Kim Chaek, revolutionary army commander and Kim Il Sung's closest associate. The city of Kanggye, in the far north he knew so well, has been renamed for him. The average age of the 150 martyrs is 25.

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October 31

We visit a unique institution called a Health Complex. It is something of a misnomer, since it does not treat the ailing or injured or dispense medicine. Rather it brings together in one place varied facilities for promotion of good health and well-being—two barber shops (50 barbers, most of them women), an equivalent of a beauty parlor, massage rooms, exercise rooms and enough bathrooms (public, family and individual) to accomodate 10,000 people daily. Also a restaurant, soft drink counters, a wading pool for youngsters, a normal one for adults. Swimming teachers are on hand. Mosaics and a circle of fountains add to the attractiveness of the well attended complex.

Later we visit a family in their apartment. The conversation was interesting but what I remember most clearly is that only the men in the family, the husband, a son and a nephew, sat with us in the living room. The wife and daughters prepared and served us delicious things to eat.

On this, our last day, we are asked to write a letter to Kim Jong Il. We agree on one we will all sign. It congratulates him on his election as general secretary of the Workers Party, says that we have learned much on our short visit and will tell our fellow citizens about it, commits us to working for a nuclear weapons-free peninsula and world, and expresses the conviction that increased dialogue and visitation will help to bring about normalization of diplomatic relations and normalization of human relations.

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BOOKS

Che Guevara and the FBI

by James D. Cockcroft

Michael Ratner and Michael Steven Smith, *Che Guevara and the FBI: The U.S. Political Police dossier on the Latin American revolutionary* (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 1997) $18.95 [paper], pp. 213.

Che Guevara and the FBI is a bombshell. It reproduces and annotates a selection of documents on Che Guevara from FBI files obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. Huge chunks of the materials have been blackened out, but what remains is still devastating.

Civil liberties lawyers Michael Ratner and Michael Smith decided to publish these laundered items because they illustrate the obsessive concern of U.S. police agencies with not only the Cuban revolution and its possible spread but also, and more emphatically, with Che. Also, they illustrate how the U.S. government manipulates the press, including the *New York Times*. Finally, they provide readers with a quick easy-to-understand snapshot of how thorough and incompetent U.S. snooping and police agencies are in their monitoring of anyone suspected of dissent, a practice that has grown more sophisticated and ominous since Che's 1967 murder in Bolivia on orders from the CIA (declassified documents on the last months prior to Che's death are still amazingly scarce).

Jim Cockcroft is visiting professor of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at SUNY-Albany and author of several books, including the forthcoming *Mexico's Hope: An Encounter with History* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), and *Latinos in Béisbol* (Danbury, Ct.: Franklin Watts, 1996) and *Latin America: History, Politics, and U.S. Policy* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1996).

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The documents reproduced here are only the tip of the iceberg. Although they consist largely of CIA reports sent to the FBI, they come only from the FBI. Ratner and Smith are now conducting a quest for the rest of the CIA's voluminous reports on Che, some of which are still classified.

In their introduction to *Che Guevara and the FBI*, Ratner and Smith point out that the FBI legally "was not supposed to be involved in international political intelligence work anymore than its younger and bigger brother, the CIA, was supposed to involve itself in American domestic affairs" (p. 4). Their book blows the lid on that not so well kept secret!

The FBI started its dossier on Che in 1952, when apparently Che was in Miami. The FBI photocopied his passport and took his fingerprints. A 1958 CIA document asserts that Che "had a police record in Miami," where he "was arrested and interrogated during the Korean War" (p. 31). Yet a 1964 CIA report says that upon his arrival in Miami Che "was turned back by U.S. immigration authorities" (p. 117) .

Reliability of reports submitted to U.S. security agencies is always problematic, because the informants are often contradictory, prejudiced, self-serving, and stupid. One report alleges that Cubans will not cotton to communism because they like "to idle in the sun or dance to their native rhythms" (p. 6). Others include these CIA gems on Che relayed to the FBI in the 1956-66 period (pp. 20-25, 89, 115, 127, 137, 171):

—Che "never studied medicine."
—Che "has no negro strain in him.
—Che "hates to wash and will never do so."
—Che "is fairly intellectual for a 'Latino'."
—Che's "attitude towards the U.S. is dictated...by somewhat childish emotionalism and jealousy and resentment."
—Che is a "Cuban citizen by birth."
—Che "seems" to follow the "Chinese Communist Party line."
—Che had disappeared or was dead because he and Fidel had a falling out, yet Che's mysterious absence was not "motivated by problems with Fidel."
—Che's farewell letter to the Cuban people was "fictitious."
—Che was killed while landing on the coast of the Dominican Republic in a "yellow-painted pocket submarine."

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The CIA began its spying on Che in 1954 when Che was one of millions of voices protesting the CIA-directed military coup that overthrew Guatemala's democratically elected president Jácobo Arbenz in order to protect United Fruit Company's idle lands being distributed to peasants. By the time of Che's 1956 arrest in Mexico City, U.S. spy agencies had bundles of reports on him. This suggests that they probably had files on thousands of other Latin Americans who at the time were not well known.

Reports on Che and others in Fidel Castro's guerrilla camps of the Sierra Maestra in 1956 were clearly obtained by informants who spoke with or overheard Che. The CIA, fresh from its experiences in Europe, Iran, and Guatemala, was once more infiltrating possible "communist" insurgencies. Yet it showed no comprehension of why Latin Americans were unhappy with U.S. policies in Latin America. Instead, it attributed anti-U.S. feelings to "an attitude which is fairly common among young 'Latin Americans'." Attitude indeed!

Che Guevara and the FBI sheds new light on the events immediately following the defeated U.S.-led Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) invasion of Cuba in 1961. Memoranda sent by presidential adviser Richard Goodwin to President Kennedy about his meeting with Che at the Punta del Este conference of the Organization of American States (OAS) reveal that Che, speaking as head of the Cuban delegation, sought a modus vivendi between Cuba and the United States. Goodwin viewed Che as the one Cuban official most "dedicated [to] communist views" (p. 73). One Goodwin memo states that Che told him there would never be enough internal support in Cuba for an overthrow of the revolution and that in other Latin American countries "the commies would get in through popular election" or, under dictatorships, armed revolt [p. 78—note the use of the fanatical term "commies" by Goodwin, a prominent U.S. liberal intellectual]. Che assured Goodwin that in time Cuba would have "free elections...[after] the establishment of a one-party system." Che also said the Cubans were willing to make concessions to the United States, such as agreeing to no "political alliance with the East—although this would not affect their natural sympathies." Finally, Che thanked Goodwin and Kennedy "for the invasion ... that it ... transformed them from an aggrieved little country to an equal" (p. 79). Yet Goodwin's recommendations to Kennedy were to tighten the economic blockade of Cuba, form "the Caribbean security pact" to deal "with the spread

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of revolution," and eliminate the "peaceful coexistence which Castro is now trying to create" (p. 74).

Che's internationalism in practice was viewed in Washington as even more threatening than the example of the Cuban revolution itself. It is ironic that the CIA's super spooks seemed to be in the dark about Che's whereabouts in 1965-66 when he was first in the Congo and then in Bolivia, fighting revolutions in his attempt to cripple imperialism by creating "two, three, many Vietnams." Che's efforts in the Congo against Mobutu failed, although one of the young leaders of the time, Laurent Kabila, thirty years later led the uprising that finally toppled Mobutu. Che's efforts in Bolivia also failed, in part because his presence was constantly spotted by the U.S. military's heat-seeking infrared devices originally developed by academics at the University of Michigan. Several pages of *Che Guevara and the FBI* reproduce the misinformed allegations by CIA informants that Che was dead, that Fidel had ordered him executed, that Che was in one or another Third World country, when all the time he was carrying the internationalist revolutionary banner to other lands.

A final section of *Che Guevara and the FBI* shows Goodwin and his aides meeting with *New York Times* editor Ben Wells a year after Che's death in order to have the Times spread news about a Havana-Moscow split in an effort to undermine both the Cuban and Soviet governments. One Goodwin aide reports "We made every effort to emphasize "Castro = Trotsky" and emphasized how seriously things must be regarded in Moscow when they applied the name Trotsky in this situation" (p. 212). Leon Trotsky, murdered on Stalin's orders in 1940, believed like Che that socialism could not be built in one country alone because, in the words of Ratner and Smith, "the forces of the world market would eventually restore capitalism to the Soviet Union unless the Russian revolution broke out of its isolation and was extended abroad" (p. 202).

While doing a superb job in annotating these nefarious FBI/CIA documents, Ratner and Smith skate on thin ice when they say that many of Che's speeches they reproduce here from the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) "are probably the only extant copies of the speeches." A few of the speeches may indeed be the only copies in English, but most are available in Spanish and other languages, and several are available in English. Moreover, the other copies may be more reliable, since, as a "Publisher's Note" to *Che Guevara and the FBI* states,

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the FBIS transcripts "should not be regarded as accurate transcriptions" (p. xiii).

Even so, it is inspiring to read Che's words here, still appropriate so many years after café intellectuals and other self-styled revolutionists around the world have pronounced the ideas of guerrilla warfare and international revolutionary solidarity as dead or wrong-headed. *Che Guevara and the FBI* serves to remind us of the real threat U.S. corporate capital and its political representatives in Washington saw behind the so-called "evil empire" of communism during the Cold War years and now Cuba today and "international terrorism": revolution, and its consequent constraints on corporate capital's obscenely high profits made at the expense of working people worldwide.

Che Guevara and the FBI also reminds us of why Che was not only feared in Washington but admired throughout most of the world. His statements resonate—revolutionaries as "motivated by deep feelings of love," the OAS as a "ministry of colonies," and, from his last public speech, "The practice of internationalism is not only a duty for the peoples who struggle for a better future, it is also an inescapable necessity."

(Continued from inside back cover)

tension for the most part stayed below the surface. What's really needed, those present kept saying—and this theme may have been the most persistent of the whole discussion—was rank-and-file democracy.

It's true that the workers represented at this meeting typically belonged to lower paid sectors often neglected by the mainstream labor movement, sectors in which people of color are, of course, disproportionately represented. So racial and ethnic divisions no doubt reinforced the sense of a division between labor "bureaucrats" and the movement's rank and file. But though the problems of racism certainly represented an important undercurrent, it's interesting that the issue was not formulated as a problem of racism but as a problem of democracy and power from below.

The other major point that surfaced repeatedly was the need for a "vision." Before the meeting, we had been led to expect that there would be a division between those who were solely concerned with day-to-day organizational problems and the pressures of everyday activism, and those who were interested in larger questions and ideological struggle. But though one or two comments were made about the dangers of ideological abstraction at the expense of practical activism, in general that division was surprisingly muted. Many people insisted on the importance of a "vision"—the kind of larger vision that used to inspire socialist activists—in the process of organizing workers for day-to-day struggles.

This meeting in LA confirmed our view that things are happening, that there are new energies and new possibilities of struggle. We want to continue to help in any way we can.

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Does the Theory of Relativity Apply to Motions of Society?

Following is a summary of Part One of a paper with the above title dealing with the inter-relation of economics and physics, written by M. Verry (Varvitsiotes)

The proper combination of about 10^{30} terrestrial atoms makes an average human being. Multiplied by 6 billion inhabitants of Earth, it makes society which exists in perpetual mutual inter-action with its environment—Earth, Sun. Society is thus subject to the general laws of motion of the universe and constitutes a unified physico-economic formation.

Energy required to sustain and develop society comes, first of all, from food which humans produce, no longer collect as animals.

Production presupposes expenditure of human kinetic energy in a more or less organized way affected by the evolution of instruments of labor. Changes in the content and form of production trigger changes in the content and form of society—ancient, medieval, modern, which also display common features:

1) A sum total of humans—Social Mass (SM);
2) Socially produced necessities of life whose electro-chemical energy is used in various ways to maintain and develop all aspects of Life—Life-Sustaining Energy (LSE);
3) Production of a given quantity of goods during a given quantity of time, i.e., Labor Productivity (LP) which is but a flow of human kinetic energy transmitted to, transformed, multiplied by hand tools and machines.

Growth, stagnation, collapse of any society depends primarily on the velocity of motion of labor productivity AND its ability to maintain proper relations with distribution and consumption that constantly, relentlessly press for quantitative and qualitative acceleration of production

Thus the velocity of motion of ACTUAL labor productivity DEPENDS ON the velocity of motion of SOCIALLY NECESSARY labor productivity which reflects growing energy needs of a growing population.

The relation between the total energy of the social mass, Et,sm; the social mass at rest, SMo; its energy at rest, Eo,sm; the velocity of actual labor productivity, VofActLP; the velocity of socially necessary labor productivity, VofNecLP, appears to be as outlined in the equation below where VofNecLP equals 1 relative to any time of choice.

As VofActLP approaches VofNecLP, mass Et,sm grows in quantity and quality. It is therefore a function of velocity VofActLP. Apparently Einstein's theories link up with socio-economics and merge into relativistic physico-economics.

Eq. 5, a form of the universal law $E = MC^2$, affects, hence changes all aspects of human life speeding up the tempo of economic, social, cultural, biological evolution of humanity from Stone to Nuclear Age as practical experience indicates. That is why it emerges as the basic physico-economic law of motion of any society, any time, any place. How could it be otherwise when it constitutes a mere extension of the continuing evolution of non-living physical bodies into living on all fertile planets?

Part Two: On the origin of the basic law of motion of society.

Critical opinions by media, organizations, individuals welcomed. Write: M, Verry, 30-06 46 St., Astoria, N.Y. 11103.

Eq 5.

$$(Et,sm) = \frac{(SMo) \times (V \text{ of Nec LP})^2}{\sqrt{(V \text{ of Nec LP}) - \frac{(V \text{ of Act LP})^2}{(V \text{ of Nec LP})^2}}} = \frac{Eo,sm}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{(V \text{ of Act LP})^2}{(V \text{ of Nec LP})^2}}}$$

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(Continued from inside front cover)

were very pleased to discover that people within the movement were anxious to work with us too.

The discussion, as we reported at the time, was very encouraging, and it was agreed that more such events should be organized in other parts of the United States. In January of this year, *MR* co-sponsored another roundtable, this time in Los Angeles. Fernando Gapasin (co-author with Michael Yates of the piece on "Organizing the Unorganized" in our summer issue), from the UCLA Labor Center and a long time labor activist and organizer, brought together a diverse group from the local labor community in a room provided by the Pilipino Worker's Center.

With a caution that is customary for any such meeting, Fernando invited about 40 people, with the expectation that about 20 would show up. In the event, there were more than 40 people there. Two things were especially remarkable about the people who came: their ethnic diversity (as you might expect in Los Angeles) and, more surprisingly, the number of young people—lots of activists in their twenties.

MR was represented by Ellen, who made some introductory comments, as did Fernando, Bill Fletcher (Education Director of the AFL-CIO, who had been the moderator of our first roundtable and who is already busy organizing more such events in other cities—for instance, in Atlanta and the Bay Area in California), Eric Mann (L.A. Labor/Community Strategy Center), Jay Mendoza (Pilipino Worker's Center), and Anibel Comelo (UCLA Labor Center, and actively involved in recruiting young labor organizers). The introductory remarks were short, followed by a lively discussion, with wide participation by most of those present. What was supposed to be a two hour session turned out to be closer to four hours, and every time Fernando suggested a break, the participants insisted on continuing the discussion.

Inevitably in such a large and diverse gathering, with so many urgent issues facing labor today, and so many people very eager to discuss them, the discussion ranged widely and freely. But some general and common concerns came through very clearly.

Much was said about the "window" opened by the recent changes in the AFL-CIO. But apart from the danger that the window may already be closing, with a backlash and renewed red-baiting already coming to the surface, people clearly felt that there was only so much that could ever be expected from the official labor movement. There were some hints of the tension that has always plagued the left in its relations with organized labor: the pressures operating on socialists who work within a relatively conservative union apparatus—on the grounds that, for better or worse, these are the largest existing organizations of the working class—and the requirements of activists outside the union structure, whether socialists or other kinds of militant movement organizers. But this

(Continued on page 53)

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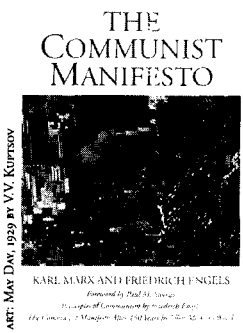

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